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Ruling allies green-light 27th Amendment draft

• Dar says all Article 243 changes approved; Naek, Tarar empowered to 'make a couple of amendments' • MQM, ANP proposals for local govt reforms, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa name-change deferred • Committee's report on constitutional tweaks to be tabled in Senate today amid opposition boycott

By Malik Asad

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses a banquet held in honour of coalition lawmakers.—APP

ISLAMABAD: Amid a boycott by opposition lawmakers, a joint meeting of the Senate and the National Assembly's law and justice standing committees on Sunday approved the 27th Constitutional Amendment Bill with minor changes.

The bill aims to set up a federal constitutional court and grant permanent immunity to the president as well as lifetime status to the field marshal rank, amid criticism that the amendment will erode the judiciary's independence.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, who also attended the meeting, said all key amendments, including changes to Article 243, were amicably approved by both committees. In response to a question about amendments to Article 243, Mr Dar said that all the amendments have been approved. The said article pertains to the military command structure.

Senator Farooq H. Naek, who was presiding over the meeting, said the bill was adopted with minor changes. He said that the committees empowered him and the law minister to make a couple of amendments.

The committees, however, deferred the proposals of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) seeking to amend Article 140 related to local governments as well as the Awami National Party's (ANP) amendment for changing the name of the province.

The ANP submitted a proposal to rename Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by removing 'Khyber', arguing that Khyber is a district and other provinces do not include district names in provincial titles. Likewise, the Balochistan National Party's proposed amendment to increase the seats in the province was also deferred.

Earlier in the day, ANP's Hidayatullah Khan had told reporters that the committee had sought time until tomorrow (Monday)

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27th Amendment to destroy democracy, says CM: Page 9

Seven judges on the shortlist for Federal Constitutional Court: Page 12

Turkiye sending 'big guns' to help settle Pak-Afghan row

• Iran offers mediation, calls for regional dialogue
• Foreign Office says Taliban only sought to extend ceasefire, took no action against terrorists

Dawn Report

ISTANBUL / ISLAMABAD: Three top Turkish officials are due in Islamabad this week to discuss tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday.

Turkiye has been acting as one of the mediators, alongside Qatar, and recently hosted multiple rounds of talks between Islamabad and Kabul following an escalation of tensions between the two neighbours over the past weeks.

Speaking to reporters on his flight back from Azerbaijan, *Reuters* quoted the Turkish president as saying that Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defence Minister Yasar Guler, and intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin will visit Islamabad.

Last week, talks between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban broke down without any agreement, as negotiators failed to bridge deep differences over monitoring and preventing cross-border terrorism.

At the time, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the negotiations had "entered an indefinite phase", although a temporary ceasefire between Kabul and Islamabad remains in place.

"Right now, as we speak, negotiations are over," he said earlier last week, alleging that the Afghan Taliban delegation again came to Istanbul "without any programme" and was unwilling to sign a written agreement.

Iran offers mediation

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke on Sunday by telephone with his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts, Ishaq Dar and Amir Khan Muttaqi, discussing bilateral ties as well as the recent negotiations in Istanbul between Islamabad and Kabul, the Iranian and Afghan foreign ministries said.

According to Iran's state-run *IRNA* news agency, Mr Araghchi, during his conversation with the two ministers, announced Tehran's readiness to provide any kind of assistance to resolve differences between the two countries.

Speaking to both sides, he expressed concern over the current situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, emphasising the need for continued dialogue, with the cooperation of influential regional countries, to resolve differences and reduce tensions.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dar, while briefing Mr Araghchi on the latest

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HAKAN Fidan

YASAR Guler

IBRAHIM Kalin

Pakistan, S. Arabia ink Haj deal, vow to boost defence ties

Dawn Report

KARACHI: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have formally signed an agreement outlining arrangements and facilities for pilgrims participating in Haj 2026, while the nations' top military officials met separately to strengthen defence cooperation.

The Haj agreement was inked in Jeddah by Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs, Dr Syed Atta-ur-Rehman, and Saudi Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr Abdul Fattah bin Sulaiman Al-Mashat.

Expressing deep appreciation for the Kingdom's continued cooperation, Mr Rehman thanked the Saudi government for its excellent facilities and warm hospitality extended to Pakistani pilgrims each year.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to ensuring high-quality services for next year's Haj and said the Ministry of Religious Affairs would complete all preparations in a timely and efficient manner, in line with Saudi guidelines.

Mr Rehman added that

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PM shoots down immunity clause, hails allies' support for legislation

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: After a proposal included in the 27th Amendment bill sought immunity for his office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday ordered its withdrawal, saying that the premier must remain "fully accountable".

"On my return from Azerbaijan, I have learnt that some senators belonging to our party have submitted an amendment regarding immunity for the prime minister," he said in a tweet.

"While I acknowledge their intent in good faith, the proposal was not part of the Cabinet-approved draft. I have instructed that it be withdrawn immediately," PM Shehbaz wrote.

He added, "As a matter of principle, an elected prime minister must remain fully accountable, both before the court of law and the people."

Separately, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, while speaking to reporters after a parliamentary panel meeting, said that PM Shehbaz told him earlier that "he had no interest in getting immunity," owing to the executive nature of

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Achakzai calls 27th Amendment '9/11 on Pakistan'

Opposition alliance announces nationwide protests; plans to observe 'Black Day'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Calling the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment a "9/11 on Pakistan", Tehreek Tahaffuz-i-Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai announced a nationwide protest, arguing the measure would "shatter the foundation of the country".

Mr Achakzai said the peaceful protest would be held under the slogan of a Habib Jalib ghazal: "Aise Dastoor Ko, Subh-i-BeNoor Ko, Me Nahi Manta, Mai Nahi Janta".

Speaking at a news conference at the National Press Club, he announced two additional slogans: "death for dictatorship and democracy live long" and "free the prisoners".

Mr Achakzai described himself as a "true patriotic" who has taken the oath to protect the country five times, noting that the current National Assembly speaker, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, administered two of those oaths.

He recalled an exchange from 1993 with then-speaker Gohar Ayub Khan.

"I spoke to the speaker that he has taken an oath of protecting the Constitution from hundreds of people, but how will we protect the constitution," Mr Achakzai said. "I suggested taking another oath from us that if any general violated the constitution, we will be on the roads. However, my suggestion was not considered."

Cabinet ministers rush to seek NP support: Page 5

Mr Achakzai drew a parallel with Afghanistan, noting the shared language and blood. "We can only forgive them if there will be constitution and democracy in Pakistan," he said.

He criticised the country's economic state, stating that 45 percent of people live below the poverty line while some seek lifetime impunity from the law.

"Then who will be investigated, a drug addict who steals money for the drugs or food?" he asked, claiming that those who commit minor crimes will be punished while those who "loot the country will have impunity".

Mr Achakzai argued that the country cannot be protected by empowering a single individual but by strengthening its constitution and people.

"We appeal to all sections of society that it is an attack on the foundation of the country, so all should rise and resist against the conspiracy to smash the Parliament," he said. "We all should get united and make a system to protect the country before it gets too late, here people are being killed, and they are being pushed to take the weapons in their hands."

Another TTAP leader, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, said the 27th Amendment was designed to protect the interests of certain individuals and was disconnected from the issues facing the public.

A draft of the TTAP's plans detailed a National Conference to be held this week to strategise against the amendment. The day after the amendment is passed will be observed as a "Black Day," with lawyers and citizens encouraged to wear black arm strips.

It claimed that the 1973 constitution was no more representative of the masses and was being used to protect the power in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Larkana.

The movement will also involve publishing articles in national and international newspapers and establishing committees to meet with stakeholders, including bar councils and retired Supreme Court judges.

ON OTHER PAGES

Israel rejects Turkish troops in Gaza

An Israeli spokesperson said on Sunday that Turkish soldiers would not be part of a post-war multinational force in Gaza, declaring, 'There will be no Turkish boots on the ground'. The statement contradicts a US ambassador who said Turkiye would participate.
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BUSINESS & FINANCE